



MansfieldTomorrow

OUR PLAN ► OUR FUTURE

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FOCUS GROUP

Wednesday, May 29, 2013 | 6:30 pm

Council Chambers-Municipal Building

DRAFT Minutes

Present- Dirk Fecho, George Thompson, John McGuire, Pat Bresnahan, Steven Ferrigno, Danny Briere, Kia Martinson, Robert Moskowitz, Steven Stein, Neil Warren, Cynthia van Zelm, Roberta Dwyer, Kathy Dorgan, Jiff Martin (member of Agricultural Focus Group), Vicky Wetherell, Quentin Kessel, Craig Stearns (local farmer and businessman) Staff: Matt Hart, Linda Painter, Jennifer Kaufman. Consultants: Peter Kwass, Mt. Auburn Associates; Larissa Brown; Goody Clancy

The meeting was called to order by Jennifer Kaufman, Project Manager for Mansfield Tomorrow at 6:35 pm.

I. Introductions- Members of the Focus Group Introduced themselves

II. Review and discussion:

- What are the short term and long term purposes of economic development in Mansfield?- Larissa reviewed briefly the role of economic development and walked the group through the handouts. She is looking for feedback from the group and asked the group to send the feedback to MansfieldTomorrow@MansfieldCT.org.
- Mansfield's short and long term economic development goals- the attendees broke up into four groups to review the goals.
 - **Group 1** discussed that there needs to be pathways for alternative uses and development proposals i.e. a wedding at a farm, allow a motel to expand. They felt that in goal 4, Mansfield should also have a goal to better serve the needs of the **region** (not just local residents). They felt that values 2,3, and 4 were lost in the goals. UConn is not mentioned at all and should be. There should be clear language about growth goals/scale. Suggested that we define regionalism.
 - **Group 2**-Suggested that there may be a need for a more appropriate tax structure/incentives, support for a year round economy, support for an entrepreneurial climate. Suggested courting leaders in key sectors i.e. green tech, materials science, bioscience and genetics, and eco-tourism. Felt it would be important to develop more relationships with key university faculty who could lead us to entrepreneurs with talent, develop relationships with other

towns, establish more industrial zones, and determine if home based software businesses need a change to our zoning regs.

- **Group 3-** Supported workforce development; make our high school one of the top 5%. Goals need to be more specific to a year round economy (i.e. advocate for a 3-semester calendar at UConn, more summer conferences, sports, clinics, etc.)
- **Group 4-**Supported many of the same points as the previous 3 groups. Made the point that agriculture adds more revenue than it takes in services-this is why agricultural preservation makes sense. Referred to people to the Cost of Community Services research. Farmland and open space help to stabilize municipal budgets. Cost of Community Services Studies (COCS) use municipal data to determine the fiscal contribution of various local land uses. Over 20 years of COCS from around the country have shown that farmland and other open space generate more public revenue than they require in services. Even when farmland, for example, is assessed at its current agricultural use value under Public Act 490, farmland generates a surplus to offset the shortfall created by residential demand for public services.

A review of COCS research in eight CT Towns shows that for each dollar of property tax revenue generated by working and open space land, on average, only \$0.31 is required in municipal services. Whereas, on average, \$1.11 is required in municipal services for residential land. A hand out was provided to the group.

- Integrating Agriculture into the Economic Development Strategy- Members of the Mansfield Tomorrow Agricultural Focus Group, and Craig Stearns, a local farmer and businessman were invited to discuss integrating the agricultural strategy into Mansfield's Economic Development strategy. Jiff Martin, of the UConn Cooperative Extension spoke about the importance of viewing agriculture as a business. In Mansfield, Dairy farms own the most land and have the most potential to expand. Agriculture is recognized as an economic driver in CT, contributing over \$2.2 billion to CT's economy. Further developing the state's agricultural economy is a priority of the Governor. It is an important issue for the town and there is lots of opportunity to become a leader in agricultural processing, setting aside land for agriculture. It is open game and it has yet to be determined which town is going to be a leader in agriculture. There is a renaissance of the local food movement. People are concerned about their health. They want to eat healthy food and know where their food comes from. Mansfield could court businesses like Farmers Cow and greenhouse industries. Danny Briere stated that there were vertical farms and other innovative agricultural enterprises that are being incubated at UConn. It would be great to retain them in Mansfield. He suggested that the Town advocate for UConn's Depot campus to be a test bed of innovative agriculture, alternative energy, etc. There is a lack of supply, not demand. Kathy Dorgan suggested that when the town rezone, they include Transfer of Development Rights (TDR).

- I. Review and discussion- After Larissa reviewed the menu of economic development strategies attendees broke up into groups to discuss which strategies should pursue.

- Which strategies should Mansfield pursue?-Attendees broke up into 4 groups based on which strategy most interested them.
 1. **Group 1- Create a more supportive environment for existing and new businesses**--Members suggested the following:
 - Survey the businesses and UConn faculty on business retention
 - Make approvals easier
 - Have more transparent documents with a timely response
 - Support home businesses
 - Direct outreach
 - Be welcoming on website
 - Encourage local purchasing by UConn
 - Seek endorsements from businesses
 2. **Group 2 Increase available commercial and industrial development sites-** Members expressed a lot of excitement about this strategy and suggested the following
 - Leverage existing privately owned property (look at four corners in the short term)
 - Investigate the potential for public-private partnerships (i.e Depot Campus Redevelopment Corporation-this would enable them to apply for state and federal grants)
 - The group stressed that there is a need for more space.
 - Danny Briere mentioned that there was a very popular living/learning community for future students who want to be entrepreneurs and CEOs.
 3. **Group 3- Support Economic Diversification**-Members of this generated the following ideas
 - Brand the Mansfield Experience
 - Improve tourism
 - Create a theme to connect Mansfield's diversity from the University, to Agriculture to Storrs Center to our abundant and high value natural resources.
 - Suggested having seasonal events such as a Marathon around the villages of Mansfield—From Horsebarn Hill to Chestnut Hill.
 - We need to develop a sense of place that distinguishes Mansfield.
- What would have to happen for Mansfield to pursue these strategies?-Not discussed
- What are the realistic short and long term strategies for Mansfield?-Not discussed

III. Public Comment- none

IV. Next steps and adjourn- We will contact the group about the next meeting. Meeting adjourned at 8:55 pm.